For me, however, this was not a request of "Mr. Kerensky." How could I know he was acting without the knowledge of the Executive Committee, the Council of the Republic, or even other members of the Cabinet? I therefore replied that as the representative of the Executive Committee and the government on the Northern Front, I would do what I could to carry out the order.

Back in my office, I called General Parsky on a direct wire, told him of the call from Petrograd, and asked which units of the Twelfth Army could be moved to the capital. Parsky replied that the army High Command could do nothing and advised trying to act through the Iskosol. Kuchin and his companions promised to explore the situation and keep me informed. Then I telephoned Boldyrev. The situation in the Fifth Army was hopeless. The Communists controlled the army committee and would block any movement of troops toward Petrograd. The reaction of the Commander of the First Army and its committee was equally discouraging.

Then I concentrated on negotiations with individual members of the army committees. My idea was to send the government single battalions or even companies that would be consolidated as a task force somewhere on the outskirts of Petrograd. At dawn the situation became clear. There were still some reliable units, but none of them would move in response to a call from the Winter Palace. The order must come directly from the All-Russian Executive Committee.

On the morning of November 5, the War Ministry telegraphed me to ask about progress in building a task force. I answered by direct wire that none of the army commanders could move as much as a platoon toward the capital. The only hope lay in the authority of the army organizations and the willingness of men to take arms against the Communists, as in July. Nobody would listen to the appeals of the President of the Government, but conceivably a task force could be organized on the direct appeal of the All-Russian Executive Committee. After a further exchange of information and a long pause, the spokesman of the Ministry at the other end of the wire replied, "We will take all necessary steps to obtain a formal confirmation of the call for troops by the Council of the Republic."

This promise fell short of my request for a direct order from the Executive Committee, but it was as far as the government was ready to go. I wired at once to the Iskosol and some individual members of the committee of the Fifth Army, urging them to take preliminary steps so that the operations could be started as soon as we received an order from the Council of the Republic. They answered that such an order would not be sufficient. The soldiers would not march without a formal call from the Executive Committee. Yet they promised to start preparations in anticipation of such an appeal.